

Kaiser investing \$35 million in 4 new centers

New Kaiser Permanente medical centers will be popping up soon around metro Atlanta.

Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Georgia Inc. is building a new medical center in West Cobb, and has three more centers planned over the next two years — a \$35 million investment.

The health plan has land under contract in East Cobb, as well as in Buford and Lithonia, said Carolyn Kenny, president of Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Georgia.

"We're trying to get out to the suburban areas where we see a lot of families and a lot of growth," Kenny said.

The health plan reported a 6.4 percent growth rate in 2005 and expects a similar trend this year.

Kenny says the company has been working to make health care more accessible to members, especially those in the health maintenance organization (HMO) plan, because those members are required to get their health care through one of the Kaiser Permanente medical centers.

"Drive times affect people ... it's very important that we're close to them," Kenny said.

The health plan, which has 286,000 members in Georgia, has 12 medical centers in metro Atlanta. By June, all of the centers will be fully automated with electronic medical records, and by the end of the year, patients will be able to make appointments and refill prescriptions online.

Kaiser did studies tracking population trends and membership growth before determining where to build

the new clinics. Construction already is under way for the West Cobb location, which is along the East-West Connector.

The 26,000-square-foot facility will open in early 2007. The \$8 million center will be another option for the 24,000 members who go to Kaiser Permanente's Cumberland Medical Center, which is off of I- 285 and Paces Ferry Road.

The new West Cobb center will have 27 exam rooms, as well as laboratory and radiology services and an onsite pharmacy. Initially it will offer internal medicine, pediatrics and some limited gynecological services. However, there are plans to add obstetrics services later.

MED SCHOOL PLAN. The **Medical College of Georgia** is mapping out its future.

The school is updating its physical master plan, and has issued a request for proposals on the state's online bid registry.

The plan will include the 28-acre campus, as well as 15 acres of contiguous land being considered for acquisition. It also will focus on a historic preservation plan, educational and research technology, instructional space and parking management.

PERDUE VETO. Gov. Sonny Perdue has said "no" to Senate Bill 236.

Perdue on May 5 vetoed the bill pertaining to the health insurance plan for state employees.

The bill would have allowed spouses and dependents of a deceased state employee to have continued access to

health coverage if the state employee was killed on the job. The bill was sponsored Sen. Ralph Hudgens, a Republican from Comer who chairs the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee, and Sen. Robert Brown, a Macon Democrat.

In a statement issued after the veto, the governor said the bill would subject taxpayers to "the liability for the employers' contribution without the reciprocal benefit of the services of that employee."

"Such a tradeoff is detrimental to the continued viability and financial stability of the State Health Benefit Plan," Perdue said.

CANCER CZAR. Dr. Kapil N. Bhalla has been recruited to Georgia to be the **Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar in Cancer.**

He will oversee the Medical College of Georgia Cancer Center at the Medical College of Georgia and will direct efforts to study and prevent cancer, and educate people about it, for the entire state.

Bhalla, an internationally known investigator and clinician, is the scientific director of the **H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute** in Tampa, Fla. Bhalla's current research focuses on breast cancer and leukemia. He is the principal investigator on a \$2.8 million grant from the **National Cancer Institute** to study a new screening for breast cancer.



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